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Some Aspects

OF

Indian Education



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SOME ASPECTS * OF INDIAN EDUCATION *

An off-hand talk by Chas. F. Lummis before the Newman Club, Los Angeles, California, November 28, 1900

Mr. President and Gentlemen: It must have been. I think, three months, since I was honored by an invitation to speak here, and it may seem absurd for a man to say seriously that he has tried hard for three months and found it impossible to write a paper. Every day of the three months, as for every day of the last five years, I have worked twenty-one hours-and vet I have found it impossible to get an hour for preparation against tonight. So I must ask your forgiveness for being compelled to speak "from the hoof." Two of the reasons why I said yes to this invitation, as I have had to say no to every other, are these: you are Americans and Catholics. Those are to me, two adequate reasons for speaking to you on this subject. I can go only half way, of course. I believe I am an American.

My people, for 270 years, have believed they were. The other gulf, your indulgence must bridge. I am not and never will be a Catholic. My family is Methodist, and has been ever since the first dozen years there have been Methodists. Not the style of the latter-day bishops, whose idea is to sit in their easy chairs and have others do the convertingwith a gun-but hard-faced and hardfisted Puritans and iron Circuit Riders; the men who corresponded in my Church to the Franciscans of yours; the Franciscan missionaries whose trail I have followed for the last fifteen years or more. For myself I have no Church. The only creed I know, can be put in short space-to find out and tell the truth; to look up to that which is greater than I am; not to my pocket, which a tailor created, someone else fills and someone else at last shall turn inside out for me; nor to my ignorance, nor to my lusts.

Your President said something about not being afraid. Every man should be afraid; but there is only one thing to be afraid of—the only thing in the world that can hurt him—himself. There is no civilization, no Government, that can make a man a liar or a thief. There is but one power to do that—his own—and there-

fore that is the only thing he need fear. Because I believe truth should appeal to all, and this special truth doubly to Catholic Americans, I think it well to speak to you on one of the most important problems in the United States, one in which every man and every part or the United States are concerned. I imagine, and have for years imagined, that one of the ancient fables was something more than a fairy tale-the fable of Procrustes-the fabulous giant with his patent bed, the giant who went out upon the highway and wavlaid all who passed and compelled them to partake of his hospitality and who insisted that they must fit his bed. If they were too long he would chop off their legs; if too short, he would rack them. And I think, gentlemen, we know that giant, although Theseus thought he killed him 2500 years ago. Who can he be, but that smiling bully, Philanthropy?

The question of Indian education is that special phase of truth of which I wish to speak. When we read in our histories how "unjustly" the Spanish crown treated Columbus, we sympathize with him. But the real chief reason why he fell into disgrace was because he was not a good Indian educator. From his first voyage he car-

ried Indian slaves back; but the Catholic Queen, who had pawned her jewels to make a New World possible, did not enjoy seeing the natives made slaves, even in golden chains. In the second expedition, in 1493, she sent those first American exiles back: and with the expedition Columbus had to carry at his expense twelve missionaries, who had, of course, their own instructions. And the instructions to the commander of the expedition were that he should always treat the Indians well and justly. That was the beginning of the Catholic Indian policy; and if I sometimes use the words Catholic and Spain, it must cause no resentment, because Spain was the backbone of Catholicism-and I sometimes wish there were more backhone now.

In the year 1534 Fray Pedro de Gante founded a school for Indians in the City of Mexico. There was present in those days the feeling that the poor devils of human beings that lived here had some rights; and that religion was real. In 1536, the first Bishop of Mexico, Zumarraga, brought from Spain the first printing office to the New World. In the year 1539, there was a book printed in the Aztec language for the Indians. The first English Bible

was printed in England in 1538. The first word of God the English could read in their own language was printed but one year before Spain had a Catholic hand book for the benefit of her Indians in distant America. The title of the book is (translated) "Brief and More Compendious Catholic Doctrine in the Aztec and Castilian Languages, which Contains the Most Necessary Matters of our Holy Catholic Faith, for the Benefit of These Native Indians, and the Salvation of Their Souls. By Permission. year 1539." And from that press, which was first in America by more than a century, there were, before 1575, scores of books in more than a dozen native Indian languages. What manner of men were these to do these things? The missionaries who struck the Atlantic seaboard "fell on their knees and then fell on the Indians." Their idea was to "make the brutes learn English." But the Catholic missionaries to Spanish America found in this New World not merely a conqueror's territory. They studied, they traveled, they investigated, they wrote, they translated. It seems to have been that, in those days, the missionary field was occupied by crusaders and scholars, and not given over to gentlemen who perhaps found the occupation of waiter

tedious, or who were unable elsewhere to command a salary of \$40 a month. By 1543 they had Industrial Schools for Indians in Mexico. Think of it! 1543! I have here a copy of the "Memorial" of Benavides, printed in 1630. I bring but a copy, as I would not dare to bring the original, which is one of but four in the world. He was Custodio of New Mexico. I walked from the East out to New Mexico and do not intend ever to walk back. The walking was not good. If there is a man who will walk it today, I will say he has a right to criticise the old-time Franciscan missionary; but until he does walk, I will not concede that right. But the missionaries had got there and by walking. Speaking of the Queres Nations, the Custodio says: "These Indians are already proficient in writing, reading and playing, thanks to the great industry of the Religious who converted them." In the "Nation Pecos" "these Indians are well instructed in the arts. reading, writing, etc." Here I hold the first book of poems by an American Indian. It came out in 1581 and is by Garcilaso de la Vega, one of the Inca Indians of Peru. He not only published that book in 1581-some one was considerate enough to leave a copy where I could get it-but he published his very volu-

minous, not over-reliable, but well-written, Commentaries on the Incas, in 1605, and had the impudence to write a history of part of our own country (Florida), and for its time not bad. When I speak thus severely, it is only fit to add that in 1605 he had about the same idea of history that Prescott had 240 years later. Then I have at home what was not printed until forty years ago, but written before 1588 by the Mexican Indian, Fray Diego de Duran-a ponderous history in two full folio volumes, of Prehistoric Mexico, with scores of elaborate illustrations. These were American Indians and under the Church which is "an enemy to knowledge."

Coming back the last of September from New Mexico with my little girl, in a Pullman, whose windows were shut down, and seeing people with their curtains down trying to kill time and afraid, they seemed to be, that they would see something in a country where everything is different; and groaning and complaining over the difficulties of their journey, I thought, "I wonder what you would say if you had to start out with Marcos de Niza and walk from Mexico to Compostela, and to the Center of Arizona, and then had to turn because a companion was killed by the Indians, and

walk back." They walked, then. With Coronado came Fray Juan de Padilla, the first martyr of Kansas or the United States. He walked from Mexico to Zuñi, to the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, back to Zuñi, to the Rio Grande and up to Pecos, on the Divide, and from Pecos over to the great bend of the Arkansas River, near where Kansas City is now, and back to the center of New Mexico. And when Coronado left for Mexico in 1542, Fray Juan de Padilla remained behind, and with three companions walked back to Kansas and met his death. Nothing stopped these men. There is another thing that I have noticed in exploring from Colorado down to Chile. There is not one of these peoples, except a few cannibal tribes, that is not Catholic.

There are thousands of Catholic temples along a 6000-mile stretch; of which, more than 50 per cent are more striking than any church buildings in the United States. An expert who figured it for me said that one built by Junipero Serra, that at San Juan Capistrano, Cal., could not be replaced for \$100,000 today—and it is a poor little hut compared with hundreds of magnificent structures from Chihuahua down to the middle of Chile.

Alonso de Benavides says that when

he came in as Custodio there were 250 Spaniards in Santa Fe, and "the principal thing was lacking, which was a church." He set to work, in 1622, to built the Parroquia, a part of which is incorporated in the present Cathedral. He said the missionaries first built churches for the Indians whom they were trying to convert, and that Santa Fe had to wait. There were then eleven churches. Yes, three years before Plymouth Rock, there were eleven churches in New Mexico. all in Indian pueblos. The Fathers had gone 300 miles across the mountains to Zuñi and built a big church there; and ninety or one hundred miles north to Moqui and built there. I want to call attention to the fact that it was not a call to a fashionable pulpit. The pay of those missionaries was \$150 a year; afterwards raised to \$330, payable every three years; and their fare from Mexico (which meant the privilege of trudging along the King's road under the protection of the caravan) was \$266, which left the fathers "out" something like a year's salary. I do not think I need to draw out to you a picture of what one of those men faced when he got from Mexico to New Mexico, say in 1608-10, when the great tide of work began. The first missionaries

came with Coronado, but the first permanent ones in 1598, with Oñate. If you will imagine yourselves setting out and walking from here to Kansas City, and then being thrown off into the middle of the Sahara, we will say, with a cannibal tribe thrown in! Where are you going to sleep? What are you going to eat? How are you to ask for what you want? If your parishioners wish to tomahawk or poison you, you can't help it. If they wish to let you starve to death, what are you to do? Suppose the nearest white man is 300 miles away, and but few of him, and he as badly bedeviled as you? It would take too long to draw a picture of a missionary's life in New Mexico-established there where I know what were the danger and hardship. And over forty of them were martyred in that one territory. Those missionaries were men! I have often thought, as I have wandered over those countries, with the tribes with whom I manage to get along well (because I can pass for either a Padre or a bull-fighter, and they never take me for a "Gringo") -it has often occurred to me what a strange thing it is that here are those hundreds of tribes, all Catholic and speaking Spanish more or less-and then in self-defense I have tried to think of a Methodist tribe. I am sure my grandfather, if he had got there, would have left converts or sore heads. It is a sad matter of fact, but not a tribe speaks English, and there is not an Indian tribe which belongs to any Protestant denomination. I have known a great many Indians of a great many tribes and countries. I have never known a Protestant Indian. I have known several that thought they were Protestants, but never knew one that really was. There was one who went to Carlisle. That man when he came to die, sent for my good friend, Father Docher, whom he had abused and traduced. This Indian was the paragon of Carlisle. A very able and good scientist has published several works for which that boy furnished the information. When the National Convention of Indian teachers was held here last year, in which there was only one voice, and that a poor woman's, that dared to be raised against the prevailing system, the most brilliant example to whom attention could be called was Henry Kendall. I could not refrain from giving my views in opposition; and the secretary of the convention, after coming down and trying to smooth me over because I was incensed at the scientific ignorance and inhumanity of the convention, expostulated and objected to

my holding that Indian children loved their mothers and should be allowed to. He said, "There is Henry Kendall, and how much better he is off-and he knew it-for being weaned from his mother's influence." I said, "Yes, Mr. Gates, do you know Henry? Where did you see him?" He said he had talked with him several times for a few minutes. He asked, "Do you know him, Mr. Lummis?" I said, "I think I do. I knew him when he was a little boy before he was sent to school and knew him when he came back, a grown man. As every hand was turned against him, my wife and I had him come and eat with us and talk with us. I saw this poor boy, the best educated Indian I ever knew, saw him carried away by the current into which he was thrown, and we tried to see if we could not keep his head above water, until he could adjust himself. But we could not. He could not stand the pressure, went to pieces, made a terror of himself; was a scandal and a danger and finally died in a horrible way; but before he died he sent for this priest whom he had abused." I said this, and Mr. Gates said: "Oh! Are you of the Church of Rome?" as if I could not tell the truth if I were. "No," I said, "Mr. Gates, I am notbut I hope I am a man." Mr. Gates

had no more to say, but it struck me as strikingly characteristic, the thinking that if a man is a Catholic he cannot be right. You know the saying, "If Ma says so, it is so, if it isn't so." The reverse seems to be the case with these people, "If a Catholic says it is so, it isn't so, even if it is so." For my own part, I do not care what church a man follows, so long as he speaks the truth. I do not much care what a man believes, if he believes it hard enough to make a man of him.

It seems to me that the secret of the policy which accomplished so much for the Indians was perhaps not that the missionaries were Catholics or Spaniards, but that they believed in something. At the back of their system was their belief-a love, a creed-not politics. That Indian system which the Catholic Church and the Spanish Government administered over two-thirds of America for three and a half centuries -the root of that system was the consideration that the Indian was a human being, born of woman and loved by his mother; that he had a father and tended to love him. I would like to be Czar for one week-just long enough to compel every American and every bigot to read the Spanish laws formulated for the treatment of the Indians-"las Leyes

de Indias." No other nation in the world -and I am willing to stake my reputa-tion on the statement-has ever put into force laws so noble, so far-sighted, so humane, as those formulated by the Crown of Spain, with Church assistance, and carried out by the official and clerical administrators. I would like to ask the Indian Bureau, Have you any laws like these: "That Indians shall not be separated from their parents; that Indians shall not be brought to this Kingdom (Spain); that they shall not be moved from their native places." They could not even be moved to a reservation! "Indians shall be civilized without being oppressed." "Since they are needy people, care must be taken that the Indians should be accommodated in the price of foods and other things." That "they must be taxed with justice and moderation, and must be sold things much cheaper than other people." I would like to see a copy of such a law posted in the store of an Indian trader who charges Indians five prices for spoiled goods! The secret of these laws was that the Spanish Government saw that the great wealth of America was to be in the people, not in mines. Where are our millions of Indians? There are but 250,000 left now in the United States, and the great ma-

jority of those are left because they happen to be in the areas that the Spanish Government and the Catholic Church controlled until 1848. They are the only Indians who are secure in their lands. Relatively few tribes have safe United States patents. The government pledge as to reservations has been broken again and again. The Indian tribe stands to the individual in loca parentis. He cannot alienate his land without consent of the tribe. The land is his to use but not to waste; not to gamble away. The land-in-severalty scheme is as foolish and as cruel as to remove the "age-of-consent" laws by which we protect our girls. Such a guardian the tribe has been; the Government has not, nor the Government schools. On the other hand, Spanish America invariably protected the Indian in the tenure of his land. Furthermore, it is a proved fact that, take Spanish-America all together, the Indian is as numerous there now as in 1520.

I meant to have read you more of those old Sapnish laws in relation to the Indians and their status, but it would be too long. Here they are, however, if you care to see them. A reason why these Indians are alive today is that these missionaries who converted and educated them were Men, with a large

letter. They came to the Indians, into danger, into hardships, to count nothing of the loss that an educated man would feel in being absolutely cut off from intellectual companionship; living forever among the Indians; living without good things to eat, or enough to eat; without sufficient warmth or clothing; without any of the things we think we must have. They lived among the Indians and talked with them or they could not have taught the Indians. They were among them all the time, and came in contact with the whole people as well as with the children, and uplifted all of them together. They recognized the Indian mother's love, and instead of cursing her for that love, blessed her for it: and working in conjunction with the family love, they had an influence which no stranger at a distance could exercise. One reason we do not get the same results is because the instruction is by men whom there is no need to criticise bitterly-it is enough that they have got to drag the children to them. They could not even live in California. We are too wild and woolly. They cannot leave the East, where they have all the refinements of civilization; the children must be brought to them. The old folks? The old folks do not count. They are breeders of children, who will

do to fill Indian schools, and if the schools are full, so many teachers get good salaries. As I think there are probably none here tonight who are not human beings, none who have lost feeling for such things, I want to tell you what they do-the best of them. I will take your own child-presuming that we are below the plane of the East. A Boston salary-drawer entitled by the laws of the United States to educate all children of the United States, takes your daughter and my son by force to Boston to be educated, leaving us at home. We may have more children when he comes again. The children are taken. They have their long curly hair, and garments which we deem all right, and names by which they were baptized. The first thing to happen them in Boston is that they are put down in a chair-held down-and their hair cut off as in a State's prison. I don't think much of hair myself; but we must remember that to an Indian his hair is most dear. It is not only self-respect, but part of his very creed. Then the clothing that we think good enough for our childrenthat isn't good enough for Boston. They take it off and clothe them in sheet-iron. I never knew of any Government Indian instructor with brains enough to remember the names of the Indian chil-

dren coming to his school. The name that was given by parental love is changed. It is not good enough for the instructor. It is not convenient enough. Perhaps not a number is given, but the name "Blue White of Dawn" is changed to "Jack"-a good name, if given properly. Then after the hair has been cut and the clothes and name changed, these children are sent out into the yard to play with other frightened children. Perhaps they find some from California and naturally begin to talk and console one another. A gentleman comes out and says in his own language. "Stop that talking! You have got to talk Boston here." And, of course, they do not understand, and the only way to enlighten them is with a switch. It is a matter of fact that no child is allowed to use his native language while in the Government Indian schools. I have no objection to his learning English, but what would you say if a man should offer to teach your daughter or son ever so much wisdom, and in payment you should have to give them away forever? You would not take the trouble to laugh. You might kick him.

A boy now living with me—an Indian—now 18 years old, was stolen from his home, by the head of an Indian Government school—the Albuquerque school

-by false representations, and for three years was not allowed to go home. If there are any good parents in the world his father and mother are. When I finally brought him back after a fight wherein I beat the Superintendent, and the Superintendent of all schools (the Rev. Daniel Dorchester) and the United States Indian Commissioner (Morgan), he could not talk to his own mother, nor she to him. My wife had to interpret for weeks between them. The man who could look at that thing and say that the system allowing it is just-I think God could get along without having him on the face of the earth. He is not fit to count in the census. Indians love their children with a love as tender and true as do people of other races. Motherlove was made with the first mother and the first child, and will last forever. Another little example—this same boy, when he was eight years old, was in a good school. After I got him out from the Government school in Albuquerque, the poor old father and mother, who thought he ought to learn, came to me for advice and said: "Don Carlos, can we send him to Mother Drexel at Santa Fé?" I said "Yes, I think it is a good thing," And they sent him there. He got so homesick that he started home in the month of February. You probably know what the climate of New Mexico is at that time of the year—a most severe one. The average mean temperature for February for ten years is 29 degrees. He walked from Santa Fé to Isleta, 90 miles, to get to his mother; and slept out nights with nothing but his little school jacket. He did not love his mother, did he?

The Indian is a peculiar person in a good many ways. One is he has not yet gambled away the eyes or memory with which nature endowed him. He can see where we cannot. I used to have what was a reasonable eye, for a white man, but it was never as good as that of the average Indian. He will point out something miles away. He will say, "That is a burro with two men. The one behind is a little taller." I used to think it was a "bluff"; but it would turn out true. They can also see character. You might look at an Apache for hours and never know him; and he could sit beside you and not look at you, and pretty nearly know what you had for breakfast!

When the old-time Franciscan missionaries came to these people, they studied them, loved them, stayed with them in health or in sickness. You would not believe it if I would count up the modern missionaries I have known to

run away because of a contagious disease. Do you think the Indian is so much of a fool that he does not see the difference? I presume that a Presbyterian school or a Methodist school might be just as good—or even a Government school. If only it were as sincere! It is not because a school is Catholic that it is good. I think the reason is that they believe. The reason our schools fail is because there is no real belief. They are "in for the job"—nine out of ten.

I can't find that any of the old missionaries, or any Spanish or Catholic organization, ever taught or ever tried to teach things one-tenth as absurd as those largely taught in the Government schools. There was one Spaniard, a Corregidor, up in the Andes, who, thinking it would be a good thing to prevent snow-blindness, imported spectacles and compelled the Indians to buy them. It caused the rebellion of 1780. But he was an exception. The men of the olden times had a religion which I like because they "had it so hard." They had also a common-sense which I respect. But there is not much of either, in these schools to which the Government is forcing the children; forcing them to forego their names, and home speech and manners, the things that are

as natural for them as for us. They teach reading, writing and figuring, it is true, and these are good to a certain degree; but I have known Navajo boys sent back to try to do sanitary plumbing among the nomad Navajos; or typesetting and watchmaking! A large part are taught to make shoesbrogans, an industry for convicts and Indian schools - a poor excuse for a good old Indian moccasin. The Indians are taught by those who know nothing about Indians except as they see them in the schools. They know nothing of the different tribes. The Pueblos were farmers and irrigators before Columbus was born; they taught us irrigation,-which is to farming what fire is to other things. Yet the schools conducted by people who do not know a Pueblo from a Comanche, treat the Pueblo as a Comanche. The Comanche is a tramp and nomad. Treated alike, both must be taught the same trades for use among absolutely different people. Then when they are sent back, almost without exception, the boys and girls are ruined for life. They have been taught that their parents are ignorant, bigoted, superstitious savages; taught what no Indian boy or girl ever thought of, impudence. I never in my life-and I have known a vast number of Indians

all over the New World-saw an Indian child disrespectful to an elder, but one, who was not from an Indian school. These graduates have been largely spoiled, for their people. Taken away from home for five or six years, from the age of five, they are not only alienated, but too often come back weakened in constitution. At this wonderful convention of Major Pratt, he presented one or two of his Indian star-graduates. They were fine bright young people—but they were consumptive! And practically, the only consumptive Indians are from the Eastern schools. They are taken East like fish out of water. *They are absolutely alienated from their people, and then turned adrift. The great new Pratt plan is—never to let their people see them again! That is better, isn't it? They are to be taken back East from Arizona, California, New Mexico; taught to be blacksmiths, etc., and turned loose in the East-and let their people get along as best they can. The father and mother will die, anyhow, and then the children will be just as near their parents as if in California or Kansas! If that is not the refinement of brutality, of cruelty, of ignorance, then I have never encountered ignorance or brutality. It has taken us a thousand years and more to rise from savagery. Our forbears had

not fire. They were raw-meat-eating, cave-dwelling savages. We did not change, and could not change, in a day -but that is what we require of the Indians. I presume that you all know that I am talking to you as Americans, and not as Catholics. I have, I feel, the right to talk as an American. I want to say I do not believe the time has yet come for Catholics to be jumped on with spikenailed shoes because they are Catholics. You doubtless know that for something like a dozen years there has been a great cry raised in regard to "sectarian education" of Indians. In plain language, the fight has been to wipe out the Catholic Contract Indian Schools. That campaign has gone on and this year reached its climax. For four or five years, appropriations have been cut down, lower and lower, and this year ended, altogether. "If it is fair to leave out the Presbyterians and Methodists, it is also fair to leave out the Catholics," said the sly politicians. The simple fact that there are one or two Methodist schools and five or six Presbyterian, and fifty Catholic, does not cut any figure, of course! The fact is that the Catholic schools were and are the vast bulk of the Indian schools. Do not think I mean to say that Catholic schools should be allowed to remain because they are

Catholic schools. My reason for objecting to the campaign against them is not because they are Catholic, but because they are good schools; not because they are Church schools, but because they are beneficial and competent and honest, and that is the chief reason why you should object to the campaign, with the added reason that your faith is attacked. I pity the man who does not believe what he believes, enough to fight for it. The fact is that the Catholic Church and its schools are the pioneers in Indian education in America. It was not until 1807 that an Englishspeaking person came to New Mexico. In 1617 there were eleven Catholic churches in New Mexico, and all had their Indian schools. The reason why I am opposed to this campaign is because these are the only schools I know of that are doing the Indians lasting good. Not because of the religion, which is nothing to me, although it is the Indians' religion to a great extent. I do not believe that one should be taken from his father's faith or his mother's faith for the whim of a school teacher. I am judging by the long results. I have not known a child from a Catholic school who had forgotten his parents or his language. I have not known any of the girls that have gone wrong in the

Indian towns to have come from a Catholic school. Not one! But I have known a good many from Carlisle and other Government schools. Go with me to that exquisitely neat and motherly school of Sister Margaret, at Bernalillo; go with me to the Albuquerque, or to the Santa Fé school, and then let a man of the world judge which of those he would choose as a place for his children. there is anything in the world, though not a Catholic, that I revere, it is a Sister of Charity. There is something selfish in that admiration, as well as something of experience, for I have known them for a long time, and in boyhood I thought they were terrible; but I have seen them when the black "vomito" raged in the tropics, and mothand fathers fled away their own children, and people fell in the streets; and those daughters of God picking up the deserted dead and dying. And I have felt their tender mercy myself; and when a man comes to me and says that a child-or a dog-had better be taught by a politician who is rewarded by a place in a government Indian school, than by a Sister of Charity, he wants to bring his fire-escape with him, that's all. And it seems to me that any American, not to say any Catholic American, could not better employ part

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of his money than in aiding the support of the Indian schools conducted by these noble and unselfish women, now frowned upon and even actively antagonized by the partisan spirit of our politicians.

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^{*}The report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1901 is an unexpected confirmation of Mr. Lummis' remarks.

















